

Emergency Preparedness Begins at Home
Council President Scott Peters, First District
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The recent landslide in La Jolla was a devastating reminder that disaster can strike at anytime. Given San Diego's history of wildfires and earth movement, government at all levels must be prepared to quickly respond to emergencies.

The City of San Diego has taken a number of steps to expand and enhance our ability to respond to a natural or man-made disaster. Public safety officials have new tools and communication equipment, and we have worked with the federal government to adopt a streamlined command and response system. I was impressed by the speed with which police and rescue officials responded to the situation on Mount Soledad.

It is also important for communities to prepare themselves, in the event of a localized or larger-scale emergency. San Diego's Community Emergency Response Team ("CERT") trains community members to serve as "first responders," preparing them to take life-saving action and assist their community in the initial states of a disaster, when public safety officials are overwhelmed. Our Fire-Rescue Department created the CERT program following the devastating wildfires of 2003.

Council District One has really responded to the CERT call. Dozens of volunteers enrolled in the city's six week training program and participate in neighborhood CERT teams. Today there are more than 30 CERT volunteers serving Rancho Peñasquitos and Black Mountain Ranch. During emergencies, CERT volunteers don green vests and hardhats and carry special identification to distinguish themselves as trained responders.

On October 13, CERT and the Rancho Peñasquitos Town Council are sponsoring the first annual Rancho Peñasquitos Emergency Preparedness Fair at Hilltop Community Park. This is an opportunity to meet the men and women of our public safety agencies and learn directly from these organizations what to do in case of a disaster and how to prepare your family emergency plan.

Representatives from CERT, the Department of Homeland Security, County Animal Services, San Diego Fire-Rescue, American Medical Response, SDG&E and the Burn Institute will be there, along with several emergency response vehicles. A local Boy Scout is putting together child identification kits as part of his Eagle Scout project. Food and emergency supplies will be available for purchase.

My thanks to CERT and the PQ Town Council for offering this timely and important community service.

And take note of another October event aimed at families, the "Get the Lead Out Expo," sponsored by the City and County of San Diego. Families can bring toys and other products for lead testing. Health and safety experts will be on hand to offer blood lead screening for children and provide information on how to prevent lead poisoning in your

home. The event runs from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the auditorium at the City's Environmental Services complex, 9601 Ridgehaven Court.